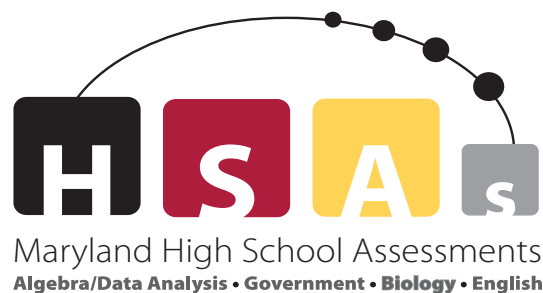


# Top **10** things parents need to know about the HSAs



**#1**

## **They count now!**

Any student who entered 9th grade in or after 2005 must pass the High School Assessments (HSAs) to receive a Maryland high school diploma.

## **Students take the HSAs at the end of the class, NOT senior year.**

The HSAs are end-of-course exams that your child takes at the completion of four core subjects (English, algebra, government, and biology) in whichever grade he or she happens to take the class—even if that grade is in middle school.

**#2**

## **The HSAs test what should be taught and learned in key subjects.**

These end-of-course exams test the knowledge and skills that students should have learned while taking the course. Coursework in these subjects is aligned with the Core Learning Goals, a part of Maryland's curriculum that clearly outlines high school course content and learning objectives.

**#3**

Teachers, students, and parents should have a good understanding of what is expected of students at the beginning of the class. To review the Core Learning Goals, visit [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org).

## **Preparation for the HSAs begins long before high school.**

The HSAs establish a performance floor for students—not an achievement ceiling. While passing the HSAs is a graduation requirement, the exams actually test courses that most students take as freshmen or sophomores. In fact, more than one in three Maryland students takes algebra (and, therefore, the algebra/data analysis HSA) in middle school.

So start talking early to your child and to your child's teachers about high school expectations, and help your child plan his or her coursework accordingly. The teachers who work with your child every day know how he or she is progressing and what additional help may be necessary.

**#4**

**#5**

## **Your child can take the HSAs as many times as he or she needs to pass them.**

If your child fails an HSA, he or she has many chances throughout the year to retake the test. In 2007–08, the HSAs will be administered in October,\* January, May, and July/August.

Beginning with the 2008–09 school year, high school seniors will have yet another chance to retake the tests. A special seniors-only administration of the HSAs in April will help 12th-graders who have struggled on the tests to graduate on time. Visit [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) for the full testing calendar.

\*New administration

#6

## There are two ways to pass the HSAs.

1. Your child can pass all four HSAs. The passing scores are: algebra/data analysis, 412; government, 394; biology, 400; and English, 396.
2. Your child can earn a combined score of 1602 (the total of the four passing scores). The combined-score option allows students to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another.

Visit [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) for more information.

## There are options for students struggling on the HSAs.

Students struggling on an HSA may satisfy the testing requirement through the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. The Bridge Plan consists of a series of rigorous projects linked to the material tested on each HSA. Students taking advantage of the Bridge Plan must complete one or more projects (worth different point values) to make up the difference between their highest score on the failed HSA and the HSA passing score.

To be eligible for the Bridge Plan, students must have failed an HSA at least twice, completed a remediation program offered by their school (tutoring, after-school instruction, etc.), and passed the HSA-related course. Students must also have an acceptable attendance record and be making satisfactory progress toward graduation.

A local review panel, established by your school system, will evaluate the Academic Validation Project at the end of the assigned work period, and your local superintendent will give final approval.

For more information on the Bridge Plan, go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org).

#7

## Students can practice taking the HSAs online.

#8

MSDE has created online courses that students can take in whole or in part—either as preparation for an upcoming exam or for review if he or she fails one.

Check out the courses by going to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org) and clicking on “HSA Online Courses.” At the login screen, enter “**online.course**” as the username and “**parent**” as the password. The “New Users” section on the right will steer you toward tutorials on using the courses.

Teachers will be using these same courses with students as part of regular instruction or as a supplement for students who need extra practice or extended learning time.

Online courses in algebra/data analysis and government are online now. Courses in English and biology will be available in fall 2007.

## HSAexam.org is your online source for HSA information.

#9

On [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org), you can review sample HSA questions and take a test online, access testing dates, learn about how the tests are scored, review the standards and content covered by the HSAs, register for online HSA courses, and find people in your school system and at MSDE who can answer your test-related questions.

## For questions about the HSAs or your child's performance on them, call **877-HSA-EXAM**.

MSDE has set up a toll-free telephone line—1-877-HSA-EXAM—to answer commonly asked HSA questions and to put you in touch with MSDE staff who can handle more specific ones. If you leave a message on the line, someone from MSDE will return your call within 24 hours.

#10